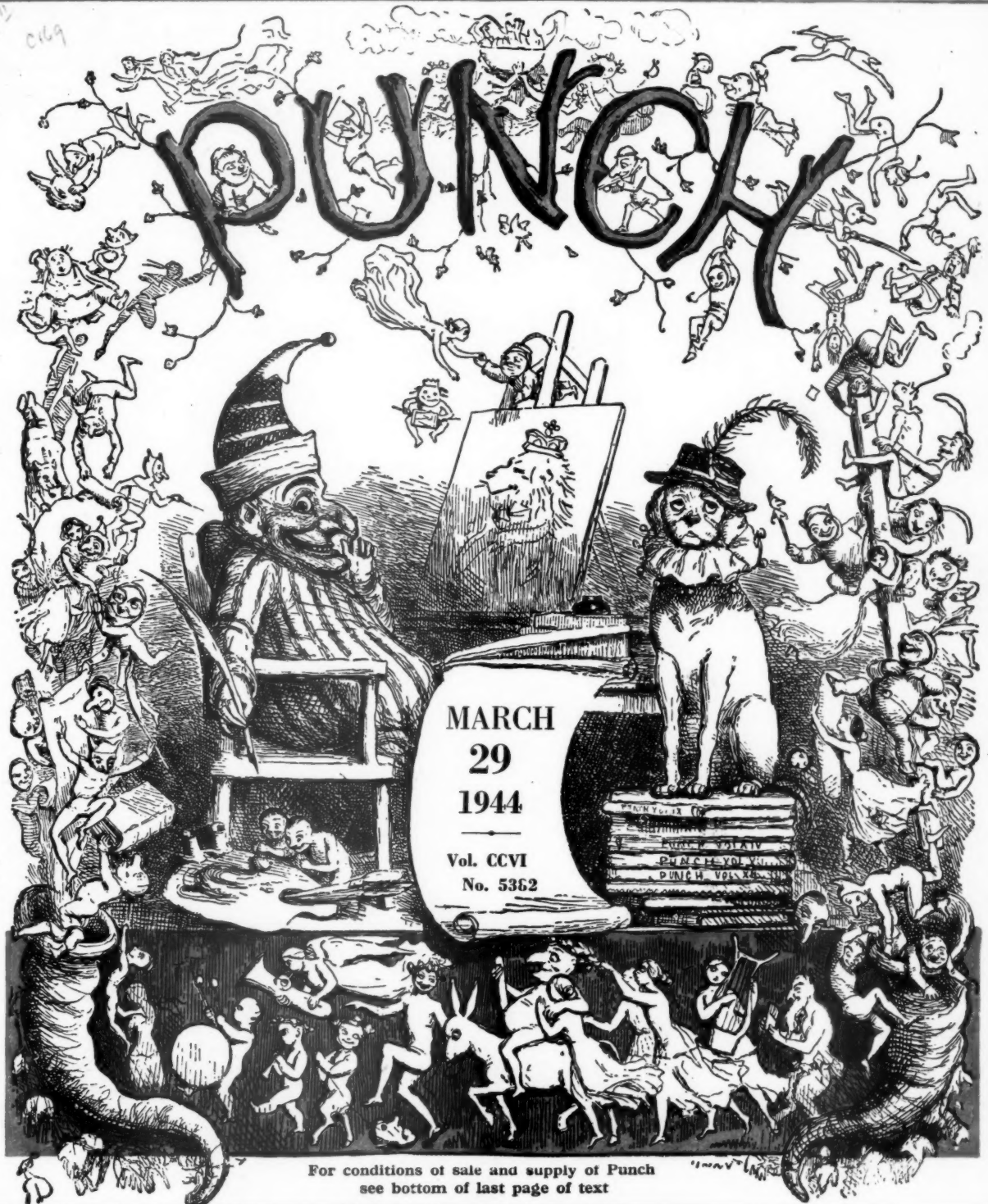


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For conditions of sale and supply of Punch
see bottom of last page of text

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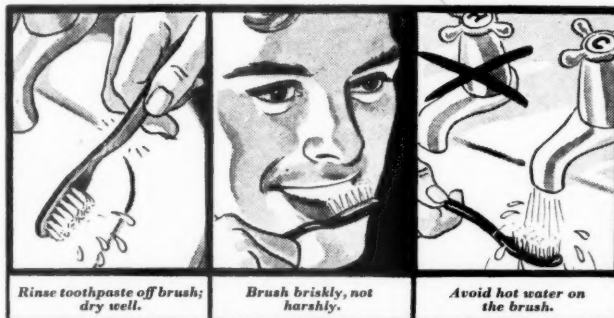
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LEICESTER

P.2

HOW TO MAKE YOUR Wisdom LAST LONGER



Rinse toothpaste off brush;
dry well.

Brush briskly, not
harshly.

Avoid hot water on
the brush.

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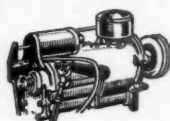
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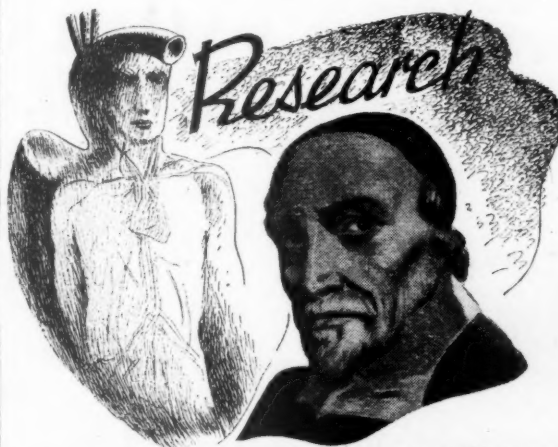


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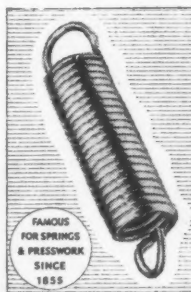
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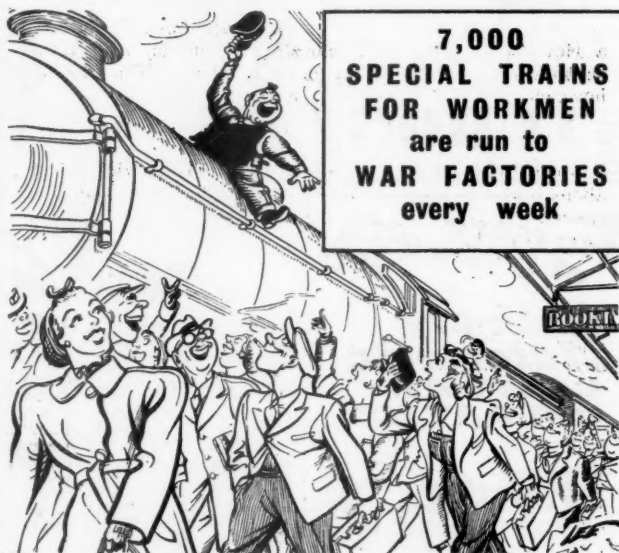
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PUNCH

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CCVI No. 5382

March 29 1944

Charivaria

THE Germans predicted the 15th of March as invasion date, but they have now withdrawn to a more favourable position in the Ides of April.

An impasse has been reached in Finland, but there are still a number of important people who have not signed it.

The part the weather will play in the invasion will soon become evident, as it is nearing the end of its assault-course in the Straits of Dover.

From the Sublime to the Ranunculus

"Eddie Cantor makes fun of himself from start to finish, from beginning to end, from the first to the last, from Land's End to John o' Groats, from Dan to Bathsheba."—*Evening paper.*

Owing to paper restrictions programmes are announced by loud-speaker in some German theatres. There is an idea here, even if it means that audiences have to bring their own paper to rustle.

We understand that the latest new weapon tried out by the Nazis hasn't yet had enough publicity to be put on the secret list.



A man in America swallowed a small harmonica. He doesn't play now unless pressed.

A reader tells us that the first thing he did when he managed a day off recently was to get a hair-cut. And even then he *still* had an hour or so left.



A huge bone found on a New Zealand beach is puzzling scientists, who differ as to whether it is the bone of a whale. They agree, however, that it is a whale of a bone.

Hitler recently declared that he would rather be with his troops fighting against the Russians than be in Berlin. Well, if he only has patience and stays there just a little longer he may get his wish.

A correspondent recalls a Chicago taxi-driver who talked about bridge throughout the journey. The London driver is generally taciturn—a trip with him is more like a whist drive.

The first question asked by a German airman after landing by parachute in the metropolis was "Is this London?" When our pilots bale out they ask "Was this Berlin?"

"The police are most seriously concerned (and so must be every right-thinking person) to see occasionally boys and girls under eighteen years of age."—*Lancashire paper.*
Well, that's life.



A provincial reader says he was surprised at the attention he received when he entered a London shop recently. The explanation was simple enough, though—they thought he wanted to sell something.

By the trend of events on the Eastern front it would seem that after nearly five years of travel the main body of Hitler's tourists have come to a practically unanimous decision to see Germany first.

If railway-carriage doors were as hard to open as the windows there would be no difficulty in limiting Easter holiday traffic.

Russia and So On

THE trouble about the Russians is that they have always crossed another river before we have found out what to call the last. How I was laughed at when I spoke of the Dnieper!

"You poor fool," they said. "It's the Dnaper."

If I had been a selfish man, I should have been sorry that we had crossed it at all. I should simply have taken away the pontoons. And no sooner had we crossed the Dnaper than I was floundering in the Bug. I have got that all right now. One has only to remember the old English saying "As snook as a book in a rook," and the whole campaign becomes easy. The Pruth however remains. It will need an entirely different action. The lips should be shot forward with a sudden armoured thrust and a kind of guttural engagement take place simultaneously at the rear.

It seems only too probable that Russians do not decide how to pronounce their rivers until they have actually got over, and this is what throws Allied strategy into confusion. In the same way when they heard that a man called Badooklio was in command of Italy they said "Let's send him an ambassador" without considering that this was only their way of pronouncing him and probably he was not in command at all.

I have given up the Russian generals. I did not wish to, and we parted reluctantly on my side at any rate. There were too many of them all over the place and they got me muddled. As soon as I had crowned Timoshenko with laurels and flowers I lost him, and succeeding commanders so baffled me that I thought I was in danger of compromising the whole advance. There was a time when our own generals were almost as confusing though easier (in some cases) on the jaw. And this reminds me of the problem that exercises so many of us "What makes a great general?"

I have asked a great many authorities and got no satisfactory reply. One soldier said "The greatest general is the luckiest one." Another told me "A great general is made by his staff," and yet a third "A great general is made by his biographers." A fourth was even more pithy and epigrammatic. He said "The best general is he who wisely judging and weighing every conceivable course of action and taking care that his equipment is better and his men more brave and better fed than those of the enemy, and choosing with skill the hour when it is most propitious to strike at the points at which the attack will be most likely to succeed, combines in the hour of onslaught reckless intrepidity with deliberate cunning and, not forgetting to be prepared against an unexpected counter-blow by the enemy, proceeds to put into operation his original plan, or some other that he has chosen in case the first should fail, or some entirely different plan that occurs to him as the fighting proceeds; and by so doing ensures the result that the enemy either retires or surrenders or starves to death or commits suicide."

These few simple words made a great impression on my limited intelligence and I shall always remember them. No one who studies them carefully should fail to be a great general if he gets the opportunity. I feel I could do it myself. But my informant was not contented to let it rest at that.

"The principles I have stated," he went on, "have governed mankind in warfare (little though they may have thought about it) since the time of the Pithecanthropes; but it still remains to be said that even when a general has

so made his designs and so executed them, he may be foiled by some sudden convulsion of nature, like a frost if he is fighting the Esquimaux in Arabia or an abnormal heat wave if he is fighting against Africans at the North Pole, or by the sudden engulfment of his troops in an earthquake, or an avalanche, or (as happened in one famous battle) because mice have gnawed the bowstrings of his army during the night. If cheese was used to soften the bowstrings on that occasion we can call it an error of administration by the Quartermaster's department. If the mice were merely hungry it was a bit of bad luck. If the mice were long and carefully trained to gnaw string by the enemy, we may say that the Intelligence Department was at fault or that defeat was inevitable, whichever we please."

"Do the Russian generals know all these things?" I asked him. He thought that they did. He thought that they even knew about mice. He seemed to think that an unexpected gnawing of the bowstrings of the Cossack cavalry would seriously delay the Russian commanders this year. But I have given up following these great men. They go so fast and I, burdened by my great Pronunciation Dictionary, so slowly. And when I catch them up I only get confused among them by trying to memorize their names. In time, no doubt, when the historians get busy, we shall learn the Pruth.

EVOE.

A Man With a Trunk

THIS is a short tribute to the most unself-conscious man I have ever seen. His name is unknown, but his deeds will not readily be forgotten by those who witnessed them.

Not many of us take a trunk along when travelling by Underground. There is a feeling that its presence may prove an embarrassment. Past experience with large suitcases has warned us that the essence of travelling by Tube is to travel light. In fact if we are compelled to take a trunk with us we choose some other mode of transport.

The man of whom I am about to speak was not a prey to any such weak scruples. I should say he was a man without human weaknesses of any kind. He stood in the queue at the booking-office, with his vast trunk balanced easily on his shoulder, showing neither fear, embarrassment nor fatigue. He gave you the impression that he would have carried a dead sheep or a smallish horse in that position and in that place with equally unconscious grace and ease.

"This is all very well," we said to ourselves, "but how is he going to manage on the escalator?"

I suppose if you were to ask a knot of ordinary citizens how they would go about the business, if compelled by some extraordinary concatenation of circumstances to manoeuvre a trunk down a crowded escalator, nine out of ten would vote for getting well over to the right, balancing the trunk upright on its end and supporting it either from the next step up or (as I think, better) from the next step down. The tenth, a selfish type, would probably vote for supporting it from the side, adding baldly that if it meant blocking the left-hand side of the stair that would be just too bad for anyone else who happened to be in a hurry. This man I am speaking of took a more direct line altogether. He simply went straight on down the left side of the escalator with his enormous trunk still on his shoulder.

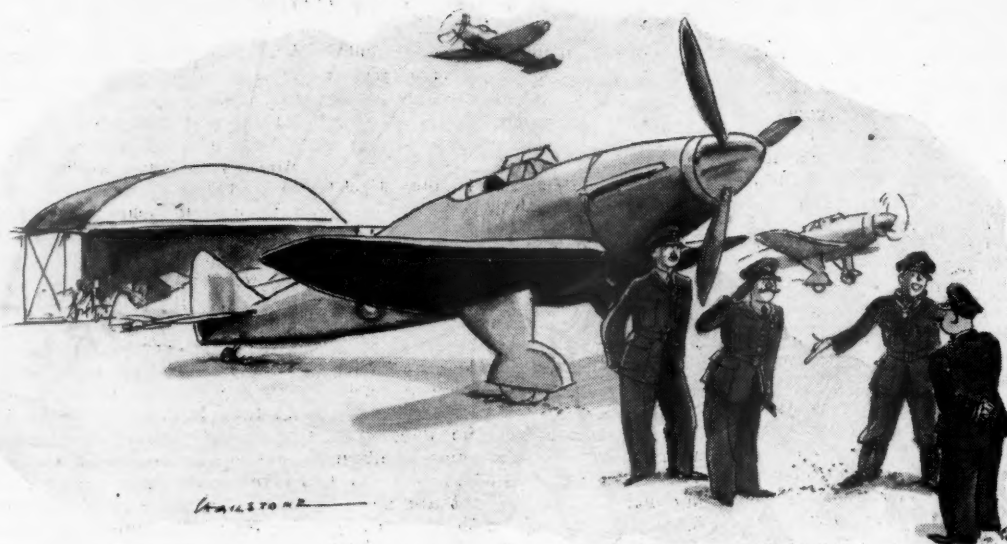
Now there is an interesting natural law that any fairly lengthy body balanced on the left shoulder tends to take



INTO ACTION

"Come on, swing those right arms!"

[Please add all you can to the "Savings Army" in "Soldiers" Week.]



"This is Lieut. Sienkiewics, Sir; we call him Smith to distinguish him from his friend Krzyzanowski, who's known as Jones."

up a position at an angle, with the back end over to the right. You can see this very clearly exemplified by painters and interior decorators carrying planks or ladders, you can observe it happening to meat-porters; and drill sergeants often point out the tendency to recruits at the slope. But there is no question that you can see it best of all when a man carries a heavy trunk down an escalator.

I am not going to pretend that every single person—man, woman and child—standing on the right side of the stair was knocked unconscious. Indeed, some of the smaller ones, and one or two Americans who happened to be leaning on the hand-rail, were not even touched and did not know until the fighting started that anything was amiss. Of the rest, men with bowler hats were the luckiest, several sustaining little more than a sharp dent or a badly-wrenched brim. The women, I am afraid, suffered heavily. Their hats are not designed—have not, I suppose, been designed since the early days of the century—to ward off a downward glancing blow from a blunt instrument. This says much for the chivalry of our menfolk, but does undoubtedly leave the wearers wide open to a surprise attack when it comes.

And this was a surprise attack all right. Looking down from a position of safety at the top of the escalator one could see the heads being rapped one after another—and not one of them with any notion what had hit it. So far as they had a theory at all, the victims were inclined to suspect the person immediately behind them; it is a reasonable reaction when you are struck on the back of the head to take a pretty sharp look over the shoulder. So that in next to no time more or less everyone on that escalator was glaring at the back of the head of the person next above him, while the man responsible, the man with the trunk, trotted happily on, cutting a wide swathe as he went but quite unconscious (as I think) that he was causing the slightest inconvenience to anyone.

There was, however, I am happy to report, a man with some public spirit watching from the top of the stairs, a man who felt it intolerable that a single human being should be allowed to cause so much suffering and get away with it. This man, whose name modesty forbids me to mention, went after the man with the trunk, following him down the stairs with such cries as "Hi!" "I say, there!" "Hi, you there with the trunk!" and so forth, speaking gently at first, but working up, towards the bottom of the stair, into a very fair crescendo. Even so it was not until we had reached the home straight that the man heard my shouts and swung round to see what was amiss.

Well, of course, his swinging round like that simply swept the last three people off the escalator like chaff blown by the wind. Nothing that had happened higher up could stand comparison for an instant, simply from the point of view of sheer wanton destruction of human life, with that last scythe-like blow.

"Now look what you've done!" I cried.

Instantly the man with the trunk swung back again to see what he *had* done; and a pretty sobering sight it must have been for him. For myself, I was unable to take any further part in the business. I am as tough, I hope, as any man who smokes his ounce of tobacco a day and never takes any exercise, but when I am hit on the point of the jaw by a large piece of luggage I go out. It doesn't matter where I am, I go out. And if I happen to be on the bottom step of an escalator, why I just naturally lie there until in the fullness of time the machine throws me up on terra firma, like a jelly-fish at high-tide. H. F. E.

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.

Lady Addle's Domestic Front

Bengers, Herts, 1944

MY DEAR, DEAR READERS,
—Some of you have suggested that these cookery notes should include a few anecdotes of some of the famous cooks I have known. "Darling Blanche," writes my life-long friend Alice Pytchley (now "The Dowager," like every second person one meets nowadays), "Your domestic front is delightful, but I can't bear to think of you working so hard. Why not write about real cooks, and give their recipes, which would help us all?"

Poor Alice—I have never met anyone, I think, who so strongly deprecates work of any kind. Before this war, she told me, she had never filled or emptied her own tooth-glass, or put the tooth-paste on the brush. She feels such privations very deeply both for herself and her friends, I know. But I digress.

I have of course known many famous cooks, from the chef of my brother-in-law, Prince Ubetskoi (Mipsie's third husband), who could serve up twenty-three courses without repeating a single dish, to my brother Crainy's* Mrs. Mundle, who could make a simple six-course dinner seem like a feast.

But first in memory comes, as always, my old home, Coots Balder, and I immediately think of Mrs. Flack. What a martinet she was, and what a temper she had! As children we would sometimes hide in the backyard for the fun of seeing the saucepans, frying-pans, and kitchen-boys being flung, one after the other, through the window. When preparing dinner she would insist on being entirely alone, except for the three kitchen-maids, who would have to be blindfolded when Mrs. Flack approached any part of the cooking which concerned her own special recipes. This led to an unlucky accident once, as one of the maids, attempting to move out of the way, blundered straight into the stove, where her cap fell off into one of Mrs. Flack's noted *consommés* just ready for serving. The latter, with pardonable irritation, but perhaps acting rather hastily, seized the great copper saucepan and immediately emptied the contents over the girl's head! But even that sad episode had its bright side. For Mrs. Flack, who had, in spite of her temper, a heart of gold, contrived specially for the poor girl

so that she could eat it in hospital with her head and eyes bandaged, a cold *soufflé* of ptarmigan which later became one of our famous dishes. How true it is that every cloud has a silver lining!

Dear, generous, irascible Mrs. Flack! Even on her death-bed she threw an alarm clock at the niece who nursed her devotedly. And then she gave her the clock afterwards—a thoughtful and sensitive act one would hardly expect from her class. The curious thing is that the alarm never worked, I believe, after that day. Even inanimate objects, it seemed, loved Mrs. Flack.

I well remember the day when Mama told us, with some emotion, that Papa intended keeping a chef! My dear mother did not approve of foreigners, though with her loving disposition she readily forgave them this defect, realizing that it was their misfortune rather than their fault that they were not born on the right side of the white cliffs of Dover. My grandmother, the Duchess of Droitwich, felt even more strongly on the subject of the chef. "Bring a Frenchman into the house and it is the thin end of the wedge, Arabella," I remember her saying. I shall also remember, to my dying day I think, my dear mother's answer. "For better, for worse, was my promise, Mama," she almost whispered, two tears, like vagrant Heavenly Twins, coursing down her glossy cheeks.

So Chef came. We hid in the laurels outside the back door, we children, and watched, with some excitement the servants' brake drive up. It stopped—and out of it sprang one of the handsomest men (my own family excepted) that I have ever seen. A flashing smile, a charming deferential manner and a graceful figure completed the picture. Chef was an instantaneous success with everyone. So delightful was his gay responsive nature that even the head house-maids seemed to go about their work with a lighter step and a brighter smile. As for his cooking, it was of course superb—though not accomplished without great extravagance and temperament. He would annihilate twenty quarts of cream, sixty to seventy dozen eggs, and two or three scullery-maids in a week with ease. But the result gave pleasure to all.

It was about this time, as far as I remember, that Mipsie became very

keen on cookery. I'm not sure why, except that she was always adorably impulsive; also I think she was beginning to take life more seriously, as one does sometimes at sixteen. Anyway, nothing would content her but that she should have cooking lessons, and accordingly Chef was deputed to teach her. Of course with her brilliant intelligence and genius for throwing herself into every subject she takes up she proved the most apt pupil and the lessons soon became daily occurrences.

It led, however, to disaster. One day my mother, having some order for Chef, sent for him after tea. He was nowhere to be found, nor had anyone seen him for some time. A search was made and he was discovered in the kitchen gardens, showing Mipsie the difference between red and black currants. He was dismissed—after a painful scene with my father, I believe—for neglecting his kitchen duties and encroaching on the gardener's province.

I had intended to end this letter with a description of one of the best cooks, in her own inimitable way, I have ever known—my elder sister Soppy*, who started the wonderful Back to Eden Health Food School. But how can one do justice to such a noble theme—she contends that, as Adam and Eve were the parents of the whole race, what they ate must be the perfect foundation of dietary—in a few lines?

I shall, then, make it the subject of my next what I like to call stove-side chat.

M. D.

Et Praterea Nihil

A FRIEND of ours in the Ats Explained one day that they use their tin hats

To keep their hair dry when they all parade

For their showers—a weekly duty;
But she turned, I thought, a bit snooty
When I laughed, though I meant no derision,

At a gorgeous fantastic vision
Of platoons, nay, battalions of Ats,
Or perhaps a division,
Drawn up on parade,
All arrayed
In tin hats
And their beauty.

* Sophia, Viscountess Hogshhead

* Viscount Crainiham

At the Pictures

IMPLICATIONS

THE fuss about the implications of ALFRED HITCHCOCK's *Lifeboat* seems to be in danger of swamping the film; and the fuss seems to me to be largely based on either forgetfulness or self-deception. You may prefer to believe that the democrats in a lifeboat, starving, parched with thirst, exhausted, uninformed about their position and most of them anyway unused to much responsibility, will automatically—merely because they have a free tradition—be better and more efficient people than a Nazi U-boat captain who used to be a surgeon and who has a secret store of energy pills and water and a compass that tells him exactly which way to go to get to his supply-ship which he knows is near; but I find it hard, however desirable, to believe this.

The point about these people is, surely, that they are physically and nervously weak from exposure, lack of nourishment, and thirst, and the Nazi is, because of his secret resources, physically and nervously stronger and more or less in his element. The only justification for condemning the film on political grounds would be if the other people concerned were shown to be inherently (and not through physical accident) ineffective; whereas it seems to me that almost any one of them—certainly any of the seamen—would have made just as competent a leader of the boatload if he had had the water and the vitamins and the compass and the knowledge that friends were not far off. Perhaps Mr. HITCHCOCK's error was in not seeing that the film public, nourished on inexhaustible revolvers and indestructible heroes, would fail to take probability into consideration.

It remains to note Mr. HITCHCOCK's abandonment of the crime-and-every-day-life juxtaposition

(his usual field) for the old all-in-the-same-boat story; he does it no less well, and the playing is excellent. WALTER SLEZAK shows exactly the right blend of smoothness, *bonhomie*, ruthlessness and cunning as

one, *The Heart of a Nation* (Director: JULIEN DUVIVIER). The trouble here is scrappiness; this cannot be judged by the standard of the great French films, for it was incomplete when France fell in 1940. The one surviving print was smuggled to America, and what we see now is introduced by CHARLES BOYER, who also occasionally contributes a linking sentence or two of commentary. The story makes one think of one of those "family" novels: it is through the eyes of members of the *Froment* family that we see Germany's three predatory invasions of France, from 1871 onwards. One's pleasure is not in the balance or direction of the film as a whole, but in the other French strong point—character, and the atmosphere of individual scenes. RAIMU, LOUIS JOUVET, MICHELE MORGAN... it's pleasant to see them again.

It is not easy to decide which to pick out of the other new ones—apart from *Tunisian Victory*, which you do not need to be told to see. As a film, this is not perhaps so good as *Desert Victory*, but it is great stuff all the same: an exciting narrative full of wonderful flashes of battle, that increases our respect for the men who drove the enemy out of Africa and explains, with a few necessary diagrams (only the piston-sparking-plug metaphor seemed to me a bit forced), how they did it. I could have done without the snatches of off-screen comment by the British and American soldier; but perhaps there is a public that likes listening to this kind of thing as well as reading it in the newspapers. . . . Finally *The Shipbuilders* (Director: JOHN BAXTER), a very patchy British effort about the between-wars twilight of the Clydeshipyards, remarkable only for an exceedingly good performance by MORLAND GRAHAM as an unemployed riveter who never loses faith in the industry. It is almost worth seeing for Mr. GRAHAM alone; but, to put it mildly, it doesn't grip. R. M.



J.H.DOWD

[Lifeboat

BOAT SONG

The German	WALTER SLEZAK
Rittenhouse	HENRY HULL
Gus	WILLIAM BENDIX
Connie Porter	TALLULAH BANKHEAD

the Nazi, and TALLULAH BANKHEAD makes an impressive come-back in the part of a tough woman journalist. Of the others the most memorable is WILLIAM BENDIX, who usually contrives to stick in one's mind.

The most interesting of a great crowd of other new films is a French



J.H.D.

[The Heart of a Nation

A GROUP CAPTAIN

Professional Portrait

JOHAN CORBETT ROBINSON has one of the strangest jobs on earth. It is the job of being himself. He is his own master and is paid quite well for being it. The kind of job that you would like, eh! Not a chance! There is and can be only one John Corbett Robinson. He is unique.

Let me explain.

I knew Robinson at school. He was an ordinary fellow—fair at games, moderate at his work, creditable in his conduct. When he left school he became a junior reporter on the *Afternoon Post*.

In May 1926 Robinson read a book called *Britain, Beware!* He was fond of reading. On page 127 he found this:

"But where is this average Englishman? The truth is that there is no such creature—any more than there is an average Frenchman, an average Chinaman or an average Russian."

Robinson thought about these words for a long time and copied them in his ordinary untidy handwriting into a black notebook. That entry proved to be the first of a very long list. The following are representative:

Any argument which includes the term "The Man in the Street" is immediately suspect.—Gibson's *Year-Book of British Stained-Glass*.

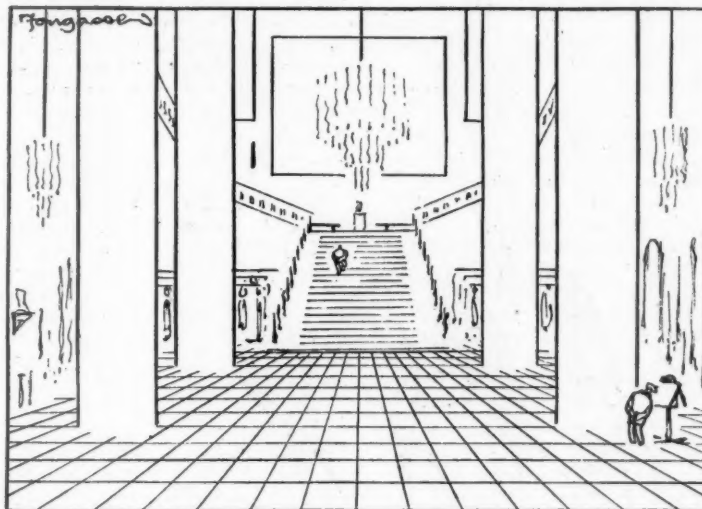
John Citizen is dead: he died with the extension of the franchise in 1928.—*Upsets in My Time*, by John Cloak, M.P.

What kind of an average is this Average Man supposed to exhibit? Is he a mode or a median?—*The Shape of Things to Come*.

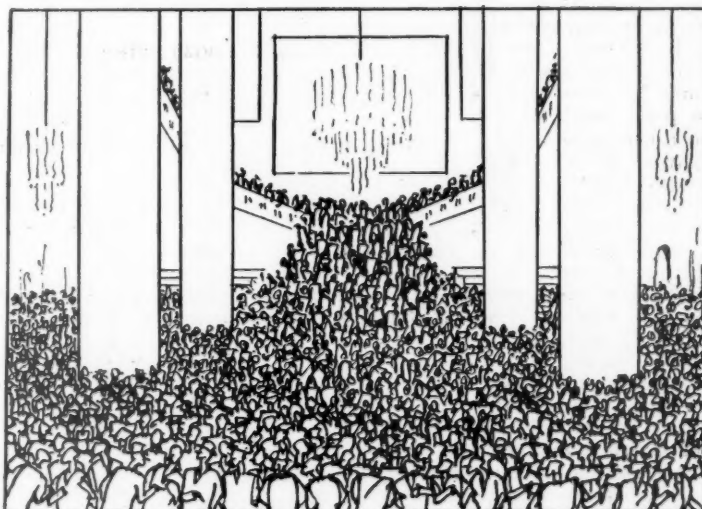
Almost every book that Robinson read contained some savage blows at that useful creation of Victorian philosophy the Average Englishman. And the blows hurt. For Robinson had always prided himself on his normality and his stock-size measurements.

He retaliated by means of research. He discovered, to his great joy, that the average height of adult males in Britain was 5 feet 8 inches. Robinson stood exactly 5 feet 8 inches in his socks. His chest expansion, intelligence quotient, salary, politics and family were found in each and every case to agree with the arithmetic mean of those of his countrymen. His hopes were confirmed. He was entirely representative.

He wrote a series of articles about himself, and Fleet Street was not slow



The best clubs have always been rather difficult to get into—



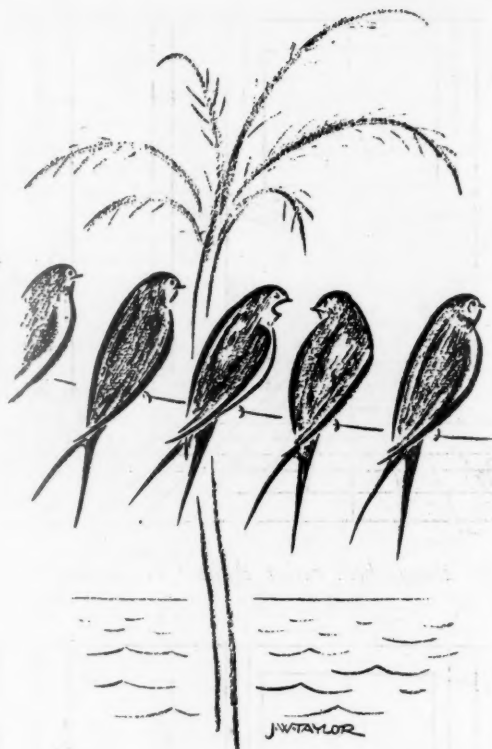
Now they've become well-nigh impossible—even if you're a member.

to recognize their merit. Harmscliffe consulted him about Empire Free Trade. Before long he was accepted by industry as the supreme authority on public taste. His opinions began to steer the ship of State.

The Average Englishman lived modestly on an average income. He distributed to deserving charities the balance of his fees as a consultant. His Press conferences alone brought him

in £50,000 a year. His portrait was painted by a famous artist of the Cubist School and is often reproduced in statistical journals. His two children are plain open-faced girls of average height.

During the 'thirties he had the field to himself. To-day his position is challenged by a score of observing, computing, scientific bodies. But his prestige is still high. Average, anyway.



"Marseilles, Lyons, Paris—feint at Calais—
Dieppe, Newhaven. Pass it on."

Feu d'Arthur

AND slowly answered Arthur, panting hard:
"The flames leap higher; time that thou wert gone.
Make fleet thy steps, and bear thou in thy hand
This snowy parchment, overwrought with signs
And fluent symbols, mystic, wonderful,
Nor spare thine ebbing breath until thou come
To yonder bold Sir Sector, where he stands
Counting the pulsing engines, fixed in thought."
And quickly ran Sir Bruno, and the night
Closed round him; at his feet the iron hail
Of all the loud artillery of heaven
Fell clattering, like a sudden April shower
That falls upon the tender violet.
So came, and to Sir Sector gave the scroll,
Darkling, in haste; and kindled where he stood
The roll'd narcotic pendent from his lips.
Then rose the bold Sir Sector, and unmask'd
The shadow'd lantern, and with greedy eyes
Devour'd the parchment; eagerly his hand
Grop'd for the sharpen'd graphite where it lay
Like some frail dagger on the Table Round:
So, cloth'd about with stern authority,
He wrote, and having writ, the urgent script
Gave to his varlet, who with scarce farewell
Sped madly thro' the fierce and echoing night;
And lightly ran the other to his lord.

Then briefly answered Arthur from the flames:
"What is it thou hast seen, and what hast heard?"
And boldly spake Sir Bruno, swearing low
(Tho' all his words are clouded with a doubt),
"I heard the shrapnel swishing on the eaves,
And the long rumbling o'er the ruddy roofs."
"Now haste thee quick," said Arthur; "get thee gone,
And fill yon brazen goblets with the spring
Drawn from the cisterns of a thousand hills.
I, with the latest left of all my knights,
Will pour upon the fire the liquid stream.
Quick, quick! bestir thee, ere it be too late."
So saying, from the lithe and sinuous coil,
Raised like a serpent's head in act to strike,
He turn'd the jet upon the middle fire;
And all his greaves were splash'd with fiery drops
Of onset, like that Arthur who of old
Rode fearless thro' the lists at Camelot.
Before him lay a furnace, and behind
Sir Guillaume pumping; and the moon was down.

Then saw they how there hove a roaring car,
Burnish'd with gleaming brass, and loud with bells;
And on that car three knights, with casques of steel,
That swift unleash'd the grave and writhing tube;
And on the seething turmoil of the flames
The crystal torrent fell in fierce cascades,
Like some high mountain stream that leaps and falls
And, falling, stirs the lake with boiling foam.
Tall stood Sir Arthur, and Sir Bruno bold,
And brave Sir Guillaume, wiping as they stood
The dew that stain'd their face, or, trickling down,
Mix'd with the nightly growth that fring'd their chin.
The bright glow pal'd around them, and the stars
Twinkl'd athwart the cold and velvet dark;
And in the skies the rumbling died away.

H. J.'s Dramatic Fragments

THIS fragment dates from an argument I had with my wife about verandahs, she taking the view that they led to French windows and hence to loose living, while I defended them on the grounds that they provided fresh air without exercise and thus made the best of both worlds. During the course of this discussion my wife took up a lobster she had just peeled for lunch and smacked it smartly on the table to emphasize an essential link in her case, not noticing an inked pad left there by one of the twins after he had been doing his prep. The lobster was now liable to give anyone eating it a stained appearance, and my wife at once sent me to the local Citizens' Advice Bureau to find out the correct method of removing the marks so that our guests should have the appropriate remedy served right beside their plates. While the staff were experimenting I had a good long opportunity for pursuing the drama, and full advantage of this is what was taken by me.

HOW MADCAP MONICA GOT MATRIC.

(The scene is a farmyard. Enter from opposite sides the MILKMAID and the SQUIRE.)

SQUIRE. Why didn't you come to the Poetry Reading on Thursday?

MILKMAID. Old cow were pining for I, so I did sit a-moaning with she in darksome byre.

SQUIRE. Too much sympathy is bad for cattle. What



"Talk about plugging! That's the third time in twelve months they've played Beethoven's 'Fifth'."

they want is bracing up. We got several ideas on tackling the problem when we were reading Newbolt.

MILKMAID. Nay, rather 'tis Housman do strike home to poor lorn Limbo and fill the great bitter heart of she with scalding tears.

SQUIRE. Surely that can't be good for the milk.

MILKMAID. Needs must as needs must. I mind I . . .

SQUIRE. I'm sure you do. (A carrier-pigeon alights on the MILKMAID.) This bird is bearing the following message: "The hour has struck. Signed, Astronomer Royal."

MILKMAID. I must go wind stable clock. [Exit

Enter SILAS GNORL, a poacher. He wears a jacket with many pockets, and as these are filled with hares, ferrets, etc., he presents a rather undulating surface

GNORL. Hear my weather-lore: I sniffed three times in the moss at the elm-tree root, holding a badger's tooth in my left hand: there is a deep depression over Iceland.

SQUIRE. Do you make poaching pay?

GNORL. Of course not. I live by writing books full of whimsical courage and details of my losses.

SQUIRE. Troll one of your country ditties as quickly as possible, and then please go away.

GNORL (Con amore ma non molto).

When the curly kale was planted
On my true love's grave down town,
The oaks were wearing mistletoe
And I was wearing brown.
The sky was full of chaffinches,
The field was full of rabbits.
I love my true love's savings
But I couldn't bear her habits.

SQUIRE. Who taught you singing?

GNORL. I picked it up when I was call-boy at Covent Garden.

Enter GIPSY JANET BRIGGS

GIPSY. The wind's on the heath, brothers; can anyone lend me a hat-pin?

SQUIRE. Don't you want your palm crossed with silver?

GIPSY. No, it tickles, and anyway I'm living on a Research Grant while I complete my Bibliophiles' Edition of Borrow. I've been commissioned to do ten misprints per volume. Where's the milkmaid?

SQUIRE. She won't finish winding the clock for half an hour. The crank's been lost and she has to use her teeth.

GIPSY. What a nuisance! She was going to show me her views of Juan-les-Pins. [Exit, escorted by GNORL

Enter JETHRO JUDD, the Mortgagee

JUDD. Yawn and the world yawns with you; snore and you sleep alone.

SQUIRE. That is very true, but you ought to say "Good-morning" first. In fact I feel that a really practised conversationalist. . . .

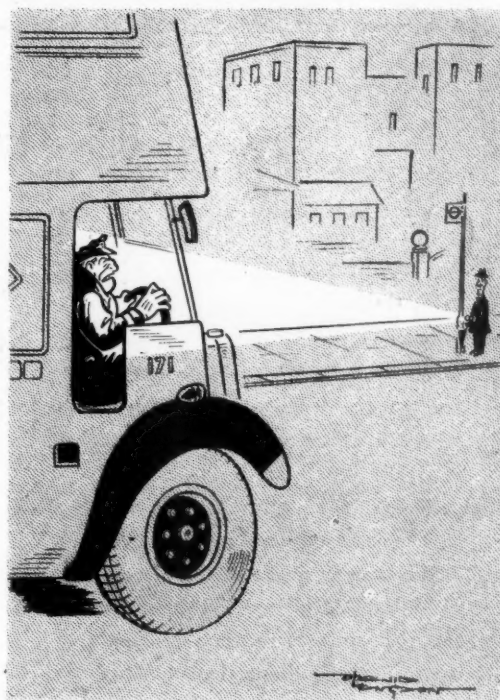
JUDD. I was soliloquizing; but to slake your insatiable sociability I will toss you a query about your health: What is your mean annual temperature?

SQUIRE. The family isotherm is 98.5—hence our motto, "Plus que le hoi polloi."

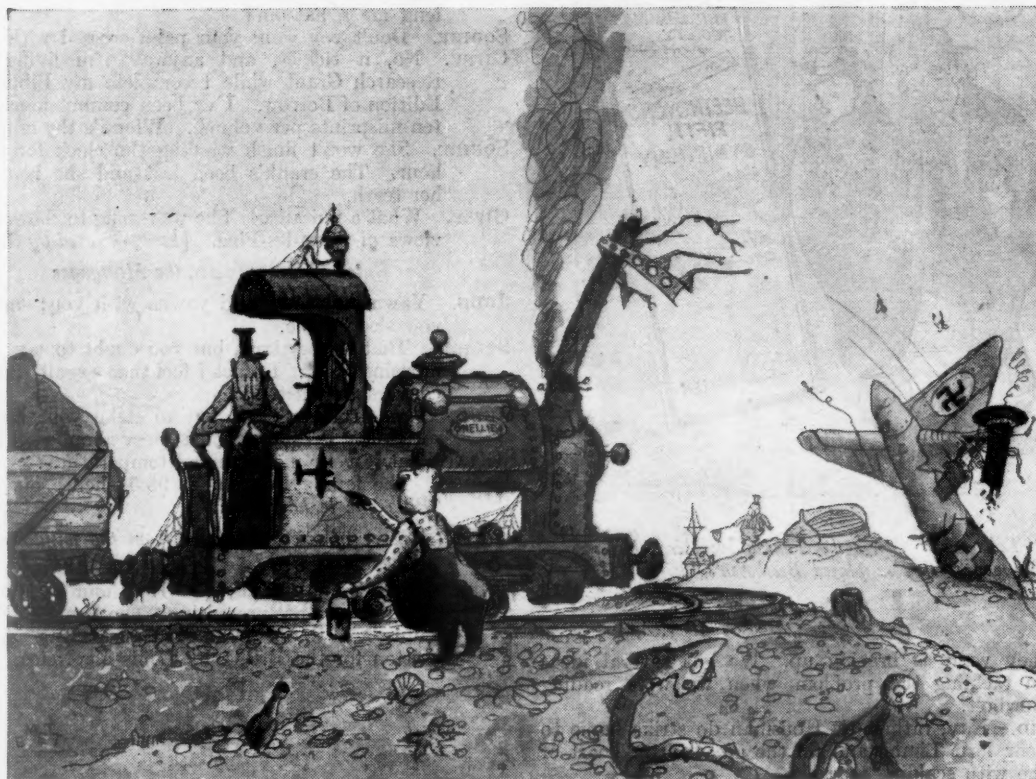
(A blare of wireless comes from the windows of the farmhouse)

WIRELESS. Here is the Friday Half-hour for Coroners. This week we are presenting "The Death of William Rufus," a Radio Drama in terza rima specially written for the B.B.C. by Louis MacNeice.

FINIS



"I'd like to get out and smash every cell in his battery."



Local Boy Trying to Make Good

OF all the titles that take my fancy
 At home or here in the Middle East,
 There are some as magic as necromancy,
 And all exotic, to say the least.
 The Akhoond of Swat I've heard long since of,
 Jerusalem's Mufti intrigues me too;
 There's many a place I would fain be Prince of,
 But I'd rather be Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh.

A reigning duke's an impressive body,
 Lives may hang on a pasha's smiles,
 The Reeks may quake at the Macgillicuddy
 And MacDonald lord it among his isles;
 Some there be who to win a peerage
 Can think of nothing they wouldn't do:
 I would willingly go there steerage
 If I could be Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh.

Dub me now the Fakir of Ipi,
 Offer to make me Sheikh of Fao,
 I should remain unmoved and sleepy—
 Just the same as you see me now.
 Lion of Judah? Shah of Persia?
 Paramount Bey of Timbuctoo?
 If I'm to be roused from my inertia
 I must be Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh.

When the war is done and a grateful nation
 Delights to honour my thoughts of gold,
 Parliament's thanks, or a decoration,
 Even a pension leaves me cold.
 Let me appear in public places
 And Society papers in '52:
 "Snapped with a friend at Goodwood Races:
 The popular Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh."



MACBETH AT BAY

"Hang out our banners on the outward walls:
The cry is still 'They come!'"

Hungary. "Well, I was thinking of taking mine away."

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, March 21st.—House of Lords: The Legend of Roast Pork (New Edition).

House of Commons: Education Bill Makes—Progress (So to Speak).

Wednesday, March 22nd.—House of Commons: The Old Gentleman Shows His Medals.

Thursday, March 23rd.—House of Commons: Education, of Course.

Friday, March 24th.—House of Commons: Secret Session on Tanks.

Tuesday, March 21st.—Sir JAMES GRIGG, the Secretary of State for War, as all who know him will freely admit, knows a thing or two. He knows, for instance, when he is beaten. And he has the courage to admit it.

He admitted it to-day, amid the sympathetic cheers of the other male Members of the House. Only elegant Mrs. THELMA CAZALET KEIR (who appears to have discovered, in addition to the secret of eternal youth, the secret of endless clothing-coupons, so well-dressed is she) appeared at all perturbed by the Minister's frank admission. And, truth to tell, there seemed to be more than a touch of relief in her tones.

She had asked the Minister to make arrangements for "demob. suits" for the women of the Forces when they are finally released from His Majesty's Service. Setting his jaw in its firmest line (and that is very, very firm) Sir JAMES said "No, not on your life!" Well, he did not exactly *say* that, but it was clearly what he *meant*.

Putting it into Parliamentary language, he did not think it possible to provide such a range of clothing as would meet women's taste, and so they would get coupons and cash instead.

Mrs. CAZALET KEIR (without much conviction) claimed that it would be a great help to thousands of Service women to have some well-designed clothes ready for them at the end of the war.

Mrs. MAVIS TATE (with something particularly snappy in the way of grey fur coats), Lady ASTOR (in her usual smart Parliamentary "uniform" of black and white) and Miss MEGAN LLOYD GEORGE (in something attractive which the ladies in the Gallery announced to be "wine-coloured") shuddered a little. Sir JAMES did not even risk a reply. Mrs. CAZALET KEIR (who shares the Minister's ability to recognize defeat by sight) gracefully gave in. So it is to be coupons for the ladies.

Another Lady Member crossed swords with Sir JAMES a moment later, and this brilliant exchange ensued:

Sir JAMES. Miss Ward has been misinformed.

Miss IRENE WARD. I haven't.

Sir JAMES. This is not the first time I have had a dispute with Miss Ward on a question of fact.

Miss WARD. It is not the first time I have been right and *you* have been wrong!

Sir JAMES. That is an additional matter for dispute!

Swivelling their eyes as though on the Centre Court at Wimbledon, Members listened in breathless silence



THE KNIGHT HOSPITALER

Lord Horder enters the lists as champion of voluntary hospitals.

to this interchange of brilliant repartee. It was declared a drawn game.

When the Chinese gentleman accidentally discovered roast pork after the unfortunate conflagration at his house, he (in the words of Hollywood) "started something." There was a sequel in the House of Lords to-day, when Lord ADDISON complained, with some bitterness, that a man who had given his daughter a portion of a pig which had formerly been his (one hopes, paying) guest had been fined for so doing. Apparently it was against the law in war-time. Lord ADDISON said defiantly that *he* had done the same thing a little while ago—and would like to do it again.

But the Government folded its arms

and said sternly that these things were simply not done in war-time—so Lord ADDISON had (like the Chinese gentleman when first he handled the hot pork) to let it drop.

Wednesday, March 22nd.—Sir JAMES BARRIE made his fictional "Old Lady" show her medals, but to-day we had the real-life spectacle of that grand Old Gentleman, Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL, showing *his*. Holder of more hard-won medals than any other Member, he came down to the House to talk about those highly-controversial medals, the Africa and 1939-43 Stars.

Nobody wanted anyone entitled to them not to have them, but many wanted those excluded from the well-merited honour to share it. So Mr. CHURCHILL faced a slightly excited and more than slightly eager House. Many of them had had their letter-bags stuffed with complaining letters from the excluded (and their parents) for weeks past, and they wanted something done about it.

Mr. CHURCHILL began with banter, and a carefully (if slightly sarcastically) reasoned argument, the effect of which was:

Good service is recognized; the method of recognition is to give medals; medals are a distinction; but if medals are given to all, they cease to be a distinction; therefore, medals cannot (or should not) be given to all.

Members laughed at the simple logic of this reasoning, but were a little restive when it looked as if the Prime Minister intended to laugh the matter out of court. Swift to sense this, Mr. CHURCHILL switched abruptly and was serious.

If courage in face of danger were to be the occasion for giving medals, then all in the land were entitled to the distinctions. All had borne themselves with coolness and courage, all were the admiration of the world. Yet, if the medals were spread over the land so lavishly, there would be no light and shade, and therefore no distinction for any.

The truth was, he said, that it was not possible to satisfy everybody without running the risk of satisfying nobody. So they had to avoid profusion, any tendency to inflate the medal currency. The Order of the Golden Fleece had first borne the motto: "I will have no other," but had soon changed to the much more non-committal: "I have accepted it."

The Germans were lavish in their distribution of medals, and the Iron Cross, which at the beginning of the last war was a prized decoration, was so widely distributed that none now valued it except perhaps Herr ADOLF



"We've finished the boilin' pitch exercise, Sarge—what do we do next?"

HITLER, who was reported to have given it to himself some time later.

It would have been better to have left the whole matter of medals over to the end of the war, said the Premier, and seemed surprised at the cheer this aroused. The award of medals already covered nearly 4,000,000 warriors, and none could have more than one medal. None except General EISENHOWER and General ALEXANDER who, by the KING's command, were each to wear the "1" and "8" bars on their Africa Star ribbons.

Mr. CHURCHILL gave the timely reminder that *all*, in these days of total war, were doing the job best calculated to aid the war effort. Service chevrons were to be given to more, including about 227,000 members of the women's organizations who had been concerned with Civil Defence.

He had been most anxious to do something for the Ack-Ack men and women, but he could not give them the 1939-43 Star without, in common justice, giving it also to the police,

the Regular and Home Guard Armies, the N.F.S., and, indeed, everybody else who had borne blitz conditions with a smile and a song.

He offered the Home Guard a few ha'pence to go with their innumerable official kicks, saying that they had, after long and tiring days on important work, played an essential part in hurling back the danger from our shores. Home Guard M.P.s looked hopefully at the other Ministers, to see whether some of this tribute had sunk into their unresponsive minds.

The decisions ("subject to further thought") announced by the P.M. were: No extension of Africa Star issue; no extension of 1939-43 Star issue; possibly some new decoration for all who were in the Battle of Britain; a medal for all—eventually—who served in disciplined bodies.

Members were not over-pleased with this. They spoke for some hours, saying so, and then the debate fizzled out, leaving things pretty much as they were before the discussion started.

One could not help thinking of the Grand Old Duke of York.

Perhaps the most promising suggestion is that all in the country should be given a medal except those it is desired to distinguish, who should have the right to append the letters "N.M." after their names. "N.M." would stand for—"No Medal." And like the Garter, it should be pretty exclusive.

Thursday, March 23rd.—The Education Bill continued its progress through Committee, and several clauses were passed. Mr. R. A. BUTLER, the Minister of Education, blandly kept his firm hand on the steering-wheel but kept his firm foot off the accelerator. No doubt he will get there just the same.

Friday, March 24th.—Tanks were discussed in secret to-day. Back-Bench Members wore the satisfied expression inseparable from the exclusive possession of secrets. So, curiously enough, did the Ministers who were supposed to have imparted them!



"Yes, they always make way for him in the queues. I suppose it's because he's such a little 'un."

Little Talks

SO you are in favour of the Fifth Partition of Poland?

Don't be absurd, old boy.

All right. We'll talk about something else. That seems to be the done thing.

Of course. Anyone who at this juncture throws spanner-words into the works of Allied unity—

Of course, old boy. I won't say another word.

And anyhow, what can you do about it?

About what?

About the Fifth—well, about what you said.

Perhaps not very much. You mean that when you can't do very much about a thing the best thing is to applaud it?

I don't mean that exactly. I mean—of course, you've got to be realistic.

"Realistic"?

Face facts.

The facts of power?

That's one of them, certainly. And, of course, ethnic homogeneity.

Golly!—I think we'll put that one aside for a moment. But about "power"? You mean that sometimes a chap may be so strong that it's not the smallest use mounting a high moral horse and telling him he's no right to do this or that?

Not if you can't stop him—no.

You take, I believe, an unfavourable view of the procession of events which is briefly described as "Munich"?

Of course.

And if you were in the House of Commons when Leftists cry bitterly to Rightists—"Munich!" and think they have made a great point, you would agree?

Certainly.

Why?

Well, it's obvious.

I think it is. You mean that Might triumphed over Right—and that we shamefully acquiesced in the victory?

That's about it.

But were we not being "realistic"—facing the facts?

What facts?

The fact of power. Not to mention the ethnic homogeneity of the Sudeten Germans—bless their suffering souls.

Nothing can justify Munich.

You mean that in the autumn of 1938, if you had had your way, you would have gone to war with Germany to defend the integrity and frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia?

That's hardly a fair question. You must remember that the whole course of our foreign policy in the preceding years—

It's a perfectly fair question. And what has the whole course of our foreign policy got to do with it?

Well, look at the disgraceful way we treated Russia!

Poor little Russia. Did we invade her, or what?

We sent that Civil Servant, Strang.

We've been sending him all the war. We've also knighted him, I believe.

Yes, but we've sent our Foreign

Secretary, all sorts of Ministers—the Prime Minister himself!

All right. Do you suggest, then, that if we had sent our Foreign Secretary to Russia in 1938 she would have gone to war with Germany to defend the integrity and frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia?

Certainly—that is, if we and France had joined in.

What makes you think that?

I think it's generally agreed.

Why, then, in 1939, did she not go to war with Germany to defend the integrity and frontiers of Poland, although France and Britain, to the best of their small ability, were joining in?

You know perfectly well. Because she was annoyed.

With Poland?

No, with us.

That seems rather childish. You mean, our sending Mr. Strang?

That, and other things. She was never consulted about Czecho-Slovakia at all.

Is that a good reason for invading Poland a year later?

She invaded Poland in self-defence.

As we might have invaded Southern Ireland?

Yes. But we hadn't got the troops.

And that was O.K.? I mean, invading Poland from the east, while Germany was doing the same from the west?

In the circumstances—yes.

Then Might is Right?

We must be realistic.

Then what was the objection to Munich?

The objection to Munich is that we were weak and cowardly. We betrayed the Czechs.

You would have "called Hitler's bluff"—gone to war?

Yes.

Even without France? And arms?

Well, I don't know about that.

Nor do I. But look here—do you think we ought to call Russia's bluff?

What about?

About the Poles. Supposing, I mean, she takes more of Poland than she ought? I don't know that she will. I'm only supposing. And it has happened before.

What can we do against Russia?

How, for one thing, are we going to get to Poland?

It's nearer than Czecho-Slovakia.

What's the point of that?

Well, according to you, you would have rushed to the defence of Czecho-Slovakia at Munich-time, even though Germany was in between, and even if France wouldn't join in? Now you say—

Germany is still in between.

Yes. But, assuming we've defeated Germany, would you then go to war with Russia to defend the integrity and frontiers of Poland?

Certainly not. Russia's our ally.

So is Poland. Rather a senior one. But I see your point, of course.

You'd better.

Mr. Churchill is in much the same position as poor Mr. Chamberlain?

Not at all.

Then you do approve of the Fifth Partition—

I didn't say that. Look here, old boy,

The Merchant Navy Men

THEY know no ease, the Merchant Navy men, Not home, with the good day done,

But the high gale and the steep sea,

The searing of cold and of sun; Voyage end, and voyage begun.

They may not rest; they wait in the dusk, the dawn,

The flash and the tearing of steel, The ice-wrap of the cold wave, The cinders of thirst in the throat And madness that sits in the boat.

They know no help, they see these things alone;

No uniform, linking in pride, Nor the hard hand and the straight brace

Of discipline holding upright, But their own soul in the night.

They claim no gain, the Merchant Navy men;

A wage, and the lot of the sea, The job done, and their fair name, And peace at the end of their way. They give; must we not repay?

Punch Comforts Fund, 10 Bouverie Street, E.C.4

Registered under the War Charities Act, 1940.

these are rather delicate matters, and I should have thought the less said the better. You may take it from me that Russia will do as she likes—she's earned it—and if we can't stop her, there's no point in upsetting her.

I see. But isn't that rather like "appeasement"?

You will keep making these silly comparisons. There's no comparison.

Why not?

The rape of Czecho-Slovakia was one thing: a sensible readjustment of Poland's frontiers is quite another.

Oh, is it? The Poles see certain points of similarity.

I think the Poles are being very silly.

Then you do approve of the Fifth— No, I won't say that again. Look here, if Scotland was a great military Power (with a different religion) and she said to us "I'm afraid of attack from the south. Let's shift the Border a hundred miles to the southward—and, by the way, I want to have Oxford and Cambridge . . ." Do you follow?

Yes.

Well do you think it would be childish of us if we raised a few formal objections?

No comparison again. Anyhow, the Poles are all capitalists and land-owners.

That doesn't happen to be true. And if it was true I don't see how it would help the argument.

My poor old boy, you're such miles behind the times. You're still thinking in terms of nationality and geography. You don't seem to realize that the new world, the new frontiers, are ideological.

I see. Is that why Stalin has recognized Badoglio, the ex-Fascist and supporter of the Italian monarchy which supported Mussolini?

Oh, well, of course, Stalin's a realist, and as a matter of fact he's never allowed ideological pedantry to interfere with practical international affairs.

Yes, I read something like that, with some astonishment, in *Tribune*, or *Trumbril*, or something. But, in that case, why was he so cross with us—and why were you so cross—because we've parleyed with Franco during the war—and because we non-intervened in the Spanish Civil War? That was an ideological war, wasn't it?

Of course. Once again we let the right side down.

But weren't we perhaps being "realist"? Weren't we perhaps refusing to let ideological pedantry interfere with practical affairs? Weren't we perhaps, like Russia in Poland, thinking of our strategic position? Weren't we—

Oh, stop it! I can't think what you hope to gain by all this. The Polish question's very difficult, I agree, and I don't quite know what we can do about it.

Nor do I. But there's just one thing that people like you can do.

What's that?

Stop shouting "Munich!"

A. P. H.

Anything to Oblige

"YOUNG LADY requires BED-SITTING ROOM: out all day; could keep self and own room clean."—Advt. in *Bucks paper*.

At the Play

"SALUTE THE SOLDIER" (STOLL)

CERTAINLY it is a vigorous salute. Between the early fanfare of the speech on Crispin's Day and the last single peal of "Come the three corners of the world in arms," history marches on to military music. Naturally there is little room for the quieter, more gradual effects. On this big stage spectacle is the thing, and the National Savings Committee and the War Office have presented—for Army benevolent funds—a sort of indoor Tattoo with the aid of two hundred and fifty men and women of the Services. It is, briefly, an animated history-book in which pictures in bold colour matter more than text. At the same time, there is plenty of linking narration to which Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth, Thomas Gray, Byron, and three Prime Ministers have contributed verse and rhetoric.

The producers, Messrs. ERNEST HEASMAN and EDWARD ROYCE, Junior, have illustrated the history by disposing their forces against backcloths of Tilbury and Windsor, the Heights of Abraham, and a modern troop-ship, and by making use, wherever possible, of the period uniforms of Britain's own Red Army which glow like a kiln newly fired. None of the Stoll's men-at-arms is alone and palely loitering: the company, whether in scarlet or khaki, is usually present in full muster, singing at the pitch of its lungs or marching with a precision rare on the professional stage.

The first half of the pageant takes us from Crispin Crispian to the days when "Lilliburlero" was new and, at length, to the sound of revelry by night on the eve of Waterloo. (The Duchess of Richmond's ball is here complete with Scots pipers and "the very latest song by Mr. Thomas Moore," which proves to be "The Last Rose of Summer," sung by Miss HELEN HILL.)

We notice on the way that Henry the Fifth, Oliver Cromwell, and General Wolfe have a strong family resemblance: the three parts are well spoken by Mr. FRANKLIN DYALL, whose

musical recital of a few verses from Gray's *Elegy* before the assault on the Heights of Abraham is the evening's quietest passage. Scenes and tableaux are linked by a declamatory herald for whom Mr. HEATH JOYCE's manner is properly forthright.

After the interval the production shakes off some of its historical cares. Burning scarlet fades to khaki, the soldiers of the Queen leave for the Boer War, Miss ELSIE PERCIVAL, with a swashing and a martial outside, lets drive at Vesta Tilley's famous song, "Jolly Good Luck to the Girl Who Loves a Soldier," and we come at length to the troop-trains of 1914 and



MEMORIES AND ECHOES

(passing from tunic to frock-coat) to the voices of statesmen in the House of Commons.

So, finally, to the battle-dress of our own day, and the most noisily cheerful troop-ship in commission, a concert-party on its crowded deck, and Miss PERCIVAL ready again—this time with an alphabetical song about General Montgomery. By now the Company has developed the swelling act of the imperial theme from Agincourt to Alamein (and beyond), and there for a while—for no military pageant, however elaborate, can be more than an interim report—we leave the Army's actors, grouped around Mr. FRANKLIN DYALL as he declaims the last challenge of Faulconbridge.

J. C. T.

"A MURDER FOR A VALENTINE"
(LYRIC)

Time: St. Valentine's Day, 1876.

Scene: The secret room behind the fireplace in the riverside house near Reading. Present: The body of *Delia Channing* (Miss CATHLEEN NESBITT), newly strangled by *Ernest Motford* (Mr. MALCOLM KEEN); *Motford* himself, who had escaped from the prison van on the way to an asylum; a persistent detective-inspector (Mr. JULIEN MITCHELL); a small flurry of minor officials, and *Veronica* (Miss ANNE ALLAN), an heiress who had been imprisoned for ten weeks by her evil aunt, and who at the end of the previous scene had fallen, gagged, from a hidden recess. It may be deduced from this tableau that Mr. VERNON SYLVAINE's plot-stuffed melodrama brims with quiet fun. *Delia Channing*, its villainess in black velvet, now rivals the Comedy Theatre's Olivia Russell for the post of Worst Woman in London.

"The quarrel," remarked Sir Lucius O'Trigger on another occasion, "is a very pretty quarrel as it stands; we should only spoil it by trying to explain it." It is enough to say that *Delia* nearly sends her vain lover and accomplice to the scaffold for a crime he did not commit, only to be murdered herself in the last rough-and-tumble. Miss NESBITT, as the thin-lipped Medusa, nicely blends vinegar and vitriol, and Mr. KEEN, on his rake's progress to Old Bailey, gaol, and asylum,

makes what he can of *Motford*, so conscious of the importance of being Ernest.

The most arresting part in this tall story from the Wilkie Collins era is that of the detective-inspector whose blandness is ineradicable and altogether misleading. Mr. MITCHELL establishes the character in his first sentences. None of the other parts amounts to much, and Mr. SYLVAINE might prune his repetitive trial scene and omit some of the jarring laughter in court. Well though Miss ETHEL COLERIDGE plays the part, it is a relief when *Annie Fraser*, *Delia's* ex-domestic, ends her turn in the witness-box and lets us get back to more serious business.

J. C. T.

The Gift

LIEUTENANT Sympton runs a canteen for his East Africans, and on the night that our beer ration is delivered at the Mess—one bottle per officer—a few crates are also delivered to Sympton's tent—one bottle per African.

"I expect," said Captain Blow, with a knowing look at Sympton, "that you manage to wangle one or two bottles out of those crates for yourself."

Sympton was most indignant.

"I should no more dream of taking beer from an East African," he said, "than I should dream of taking milk from a baby. I regard myself as a trustee for the beer, and I hand each individual bottle personally to the rightful owner. My British sergeant is an admirable man, and he has full control of arms and ammunition, but when it comes to beer I feel that the responsibility is too great to pass on to another."

Captain Blow apologized. He said that he had not intended to impute any sort of dishonesty to Lieutenant Sympton, but thought that possibly there might be teetotalers in the Detachment.

This set Sympton thinking. The one meagre bottle per week which was his ration in the Mess did little more than rouse a desire for more. If he could find a teetotaler among his men, or better still, two or three teetotalers, life at El Billa would be almost worth living.

So he set inquiries on foot, through a reliable sergeant named Masambola Bulambosa, and Masambola brought him a list of five teetotalers.

"But they always buy their ration of beer," said Sympton, "so they can't be teetotalers."

"They buy it for their friends," explained Masambola.

Sympton said that he reckoned that after all he had done for the men he felt they ought to regard him as a friend, and the next time the beer ration arrived he tried to persuade the five teetotalers to sell him their ration.

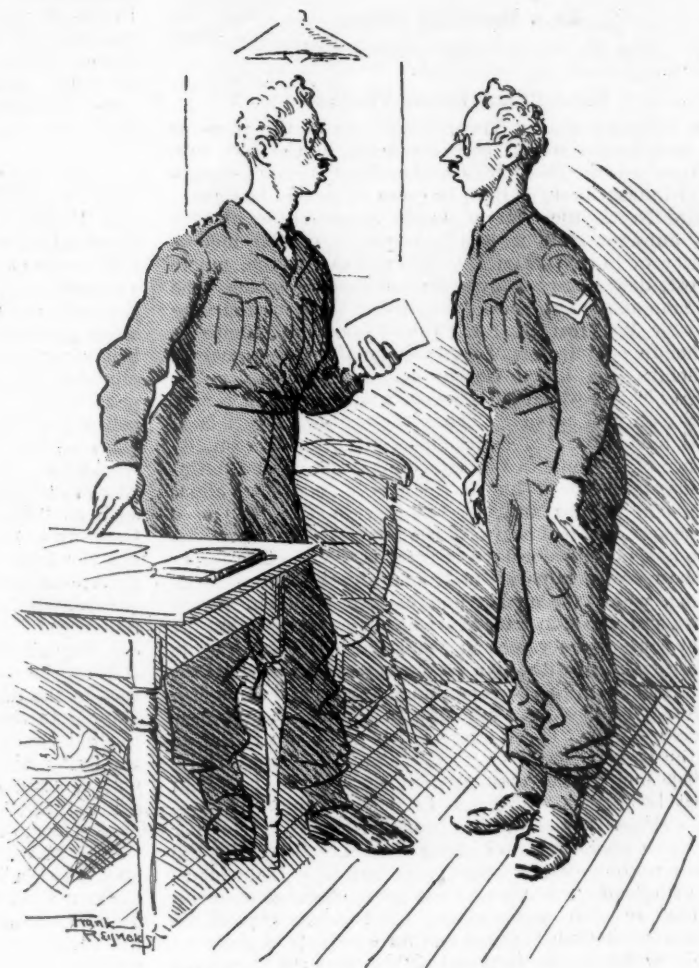
The first was Bumbakali Mukasa, who is a teetotaler on religious grounds. Sympton told Bumbakali that he quite agreed with him that beer was irreligious, and complimented him on not drinking it, but did Bumbakali think it right to sell it to a friend, and thus probably lead the friend astray? Bumbakali, a simple man, was convinced by this argument, but instead of letting Sympton keep the beer, he paid for it and then

poured it over the desert so that it should not do anybody any harm.

Sympton tried different methods of approach with the next three teetotalers, but none of them seemed to see what he was driving at, and when the last hope of all came in, a man named Dungu Kabangu, he decided to go straight to the point.

"I only get one bottle of beer in the Officers' Mess," he said in his best Swahili, "and one bottle is no good. You do not want your bottle. If I have two bottles I shall be happy. Two bottles make a man happy."

The man mumbled something which Sympton took to be a full agreement with this last sentiment, so Sympton further asked him to take the beer to the Officers' Mess at seven.



"What makes you think you'd make an officer?"

Unfortunately Sympton was a bit late, and when Dungu arrived at the Mess with the beer the Medical Officer, who understands Swahili, asked what he wanted, and Dungu, who was not a teetotaler at all, told him that Lieutenant Sympton had promised him (Dungu) his (Sympton's) bottle of beer, as one bottle was no good to anybody, but two bottles made a man happy.

Whether Sympton's Swahili or the M.O.'s Swahili was at fault will never be known, but Sympton not only lost his beer but has been pestered ever since by the rest of his Africans, who have got hold of the idea that he is a teetotaler and that he will be glad to find an African to relieve him of his beer every week.

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Sir William Beach Thomas

SIR WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS was one of the three or four best-known special correspondents in the last war. His paper was the *Daily Mail*, and in *The Way of a Countryman* (MICHAEL JOSEPH, 10/6) he gives an attractive picture of Lord Northcliffe. Many people have written of that great autocrat, but it is characteristic of the modest sincerity of Sir WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS that he, unlike the rest, does not gloss over the nervousness which "the large man at the large desk" inspired in those approaching him. Sir WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS quotes a tribute to Northcliffe paid by Mr. Lloyd George after their quarrel. Northcliffe, Mr. Lloyd George said, ran his paper "to express ideas in which he believed, while other proprietors thought only of profits." That the author of this book should have attracted Northcliffe's attention is certainly evidence of fine qualities in the composition of that extraordinary man, for although there is a good deal about journalism, politics and the last war in *The Way of a Countryman*, the real charm of the book is in its expression of the author's lifelong love of rural England. His father was the rector of a parish in Huntingdonshire, near Little Gidding, which the author and his brother often visited as boys and which in later years has come to represent for him everything he values in the English countryside, its past associations, with *John Inglesant* and Cowley and the holy household of the Ferrars, mingling with and deepening its present beauty. A slight flaw in his delight in it may be inferred from "Quite lately it has given the title to a book of alleged verse by T. S. Eliot," but what really troubles him is the depopulation during the last half century of Little Gidding and its neighbouring villages—"Not a village thereabouts but is smaller, some by eighty per cent., than when Victoria ended her reign." Describing the familiar scene as it now appears, he writes—"Eloquent as the battlements and spires of the great churches stands a windmill set on the highest point. It had once ground the corn for surrounding farmers and for hundreds of gleaners. Its sails no longer revolved and no wagons went to and fro on its private roads. . . . So do we English despise and cheapen our own land." He ends, however, with the hope that a decentralization of industry after the war may revive village life. The future, he believes, may yet see Merrie England once again. Let us hope that this forecast will come true, and that Little Gidding may survive, with all its historic associations, among which T. S. Eliot's poem, when time has exercised its usual transmuting effect, will doubtless be quite as potent as Cowley and the Ferrar household.

H. K.

Swan-Song

How little the young, who have to fight them, know about wars! They "start," as the Victorian feuilletons put it, "to-day" and they have seldom read the back numbers. Mr. STEPHEN HAGGARD's gallant and pathetic testament to the two little sons he was never to see again is far more interesting as a tribute to peace than as a tribute to war. In the course of a crowded twenty-nine years the writer had seriously tried to combine an actor's life with something like the pursuit of perfection; and for the future he commends to his children, the most important thing about him was his vow "never to take a good part in a bad play as long as I could get a bad part in a good play." Wars are made by those whose lust for possessions or power is

greater than their zest for honest work; and the author of *I'll Go To Bed At Noon* (FABER, 5/-) was one of the few who tried to reverse the process. When he fought he fought, he says, for free thought against spoon-fed thought, for happy-go-lucky life against dragooned life, for man versus machine, for human hearts and smiles versus clock-work and time-tables. He was happy in his passing.

H. P. E.

Variations on an English Theme

A. E. COPPARD once wrote a story about a gentleman, a cook and a musical box. The musical box started to play, and for no particular reason the gentleman who had lived so staidly and respectably for years held out his hands to the cook and started waltzing round and round, down the steps and into the beyond. This story, with its troubling behaviour on the part of ordinary people, contains in miniature the genius of COPPARD—freakish, tender, oddly penetrating, much imitated but inimitable. His new collection, *Ugly Anna* (METHUEN, 8/6), is not different from what he has given us these twenty years, or perhaps it would be more grateful to say it is equally good, with no flaw in the crystal. Some of these stories are pure fantasy, such as "The Drum," and "Cheese," a new version of COPPARD's favourite of the mouse-trap. But these are not the heart of his peculiar mystery, which consists in variations on the English theme. These characters who are animated by a life which is so grotesque, or tell with a reminiscent chuckle of such strange twists of fate—they are English of the English and recognizable from every country lane, rectory, pub and doorstep. "Under the turf lie the dead and gone neighbours, as close as may be allowed to the triangular green beside the post office and the old Swan tavern." From the dead neighbours and the living, the Jordans and the Merryweathers, Smulveys and Slowlys, Purdys and Cattermuts, COPPARD spins his delicate tall stories. And from the homeliest (not the Basic) forms of the English language he spins his style. "The widow's last man had hung himself on a plum-tree, and that's a cold warning to any bachelor." . . . "The clock of time ticks you off, it ticks you off, and although Thaniel's hour had not yet struck he was being put, and not very gently either, on one side." Here is beauty, and with it goes a warning: "In some tales there is occasionally a little more than at first meets the eye, buried lightly as it were. It can't be helped, that's the way it goes."

P. M. F.

Sheep, Wolves and Others

Until democracy can confer independence and responsibility on the ordinary man there is not much point in sending politico-economic missions to the dictatorships. If you yourself are a sheep the wolf may be a military junta or a bureaucracy—it makes very little odds to the flock. An Argentine student stressed this useful point when Mr. WALDO FRANK's *South American Journey* (GOLLANCZ, 10/6) brought him up against her stronghold of isolationism. "The wolves must go and the sheep," she said. "Let there be human beings." For a lecturer who came to further pan-American solidarity under the aegis of the United States the author's Red bias strikes one as unhelpful; the more so as he boasts of displaying on occasion a rather crude indifference to accepted Christian values. Yet an unflagging receptivity sustained him through a kaleidoscopic change of scene; and five of the ten independent nations of the southern hemisphere contributed their quota to his enlightenment. Admitting the tension between South America's "European" civilization and the mechanized efficiency of the U.S.A., he pleads

for a cultural *rapprochement*; and this suggestion, together with the necessity for eliminating foreign concessions in favour of native ventures, lies at the heart of his book's practical proposals.

H. P. E.

A B C of World Citizenship

Peace, like happiness, is a by-product. It will be ensured only by a conscious direction of the aspirations of mankind to an ideal of common service. Such a state of mind must be fostered by means that are psychologically apt through world-wide education bent through all grades and subjects to a common focus. So says Dr. MAXWELL GARNETT, ranging a universe of ideas to bring to that central illumination the essential method and inspiration, in *The World We Mean To Make and the Part of Education In Making It* (FABER, 10/6). At the core of the radiance is the Christian religion. This volume is too full both of immense principles and of debatable details for easy passage and is not lubricated by the writer's passion for footnotes. Its real profundity is lightened occasionally, as, for instance, by proposals for cross-examining padres on their sermons or for dividing classes between English as spoken by the broadcasting announcers and the English that is the tongue of the street. The liveliest impression such a volume may leave is that in an erupting world education is a very capable volcano. How on earth most of us managed to get educated—if indeed anyone does ever quite get there—is matter for marvel when remembered methods are contrasted with all the new ideas. One might very nearly wish to start all over again. C. C. P.

On Food

This book (*The Origin of Food Habits*, FABER, 15/-) may frighten the ordinary reader, especially if he opens it at its postscript, in which the author, Mr. H. D. RENNER, says that he has conducted his inquiry in conformity with the methods laid down by K. Lewin in his *Principles of Topological Psychology*. But if the reader is content to leave the larger implications of this treatise to those who are capable of grasping them, he will find a very great deal to interest and amuse him in the author's ingenious theories and in the illustrations with which he supports them. Why are favourite dishes eaten quickly? In order, Mr. RENNER explains, to avoid fatiguing the sense of smell. For the same reason we eat bread during a meal in order that the contrasting flavour of the bread may send us back with renewed vigour to the meal itself. Why do children openly, and grown-up persons surreptitiously, push the plate a little to one side at the end of a course? The plate, says Mr. RENNER, has lost the challenging character it possessed at the beginning of the meal, and so receives a contemptuous push. In a chapter on food prejudices Mr. RENNER disposes of the notion that foods can be divided absolutely into palatable and unpalatable, and gives a list compiled by a German writer of the varying tastes of certain races and nations. Fish, it seems, is unpleasant to South and East African negroes and many Mongol tribes; fowl to nearly all Mongols and the Indians of Guiana; beef to Hindus, Chinese and Parsees; milk to Dayaks, Malays, Dravidians and Old Caribbees. On the other hand, there are Australasian tribes which regard snakes and maggots as delicacies; the natives of Brunei delight in rotten eggs, and Europeans in highly-flavoured game and cheese. The influence on food habits of other than purely gastronomic factors occupies some interesting pages. A sandwich lacks the attraction of a single slice spread with something that appeals to the eye, yet has managed to establish itself because it can replace a meal,

requires neither crockery nor cutlery, and can be eaten without smearing the fingers. Hostility to France created the taste for port among the English upper classes during the eighteenth century; and hostility to the Turks kept the Viennese off coffee until it had been treated in such a way as to make it, for Turks, undrinkable.

H. K.

Here, There, Everywhere

If there are still people who take a nap after lunch Mr. LOUIS GOLDING has the very book for them. This is not to suggest of course that *Pale Blue Nightgown* (HUTCHINSON, 8/6) is not extremely entertaining: merely that readers may be still more entertained between sleeping and waking, when the critical faculties are low. Mr. GOLDING has a lighthearted and unlimited invention: he tells stories on every subject and of most places on earth. Ghouls, ghosts, murderers are play to him; he is at home with prize-fighters and princesses; in his pages California, Austria and Bloomsbury Square are all one; and he has thought up an original and terrifying judgment on small boys who see through the conjurer's magic. To quarrel with him because he cannot always interest one in character and emotion—in fact he does once, in the tale which rightly gives its name to the collection—would be ingratitude. All the same, on one point the other extremists, the writers of short stories who are no good at plots, have the advantage—with them a moment of time can be as full as another man's month, and without stirring from a room in North London they can sometimes contrive to show all the kingdoms of the world. If we are to be honest as well as polite we must confess that, having accompanied Mr. GOLDING everywhere and seen and heard innumerable wonders, at the end we remember two things—how a poor shy schoolmaster dreaded his boys and how *Eustace Huxtable* vanished instead of the rabbit.

J. S.

Camera in the Sand

Desert Journey (CRESSET PRESS, 15/-), by Mr. GEORGE RODGER, deserves to be read and treasured not only for its own sake and for its magnificent photographs but as a constant reminder of the price paid by others for the sake of our information. The author, sponsored by *Life* magazine, left England at the height of the 1940 London blitz on a journey for the Free French Cameroons. He was passenger in a ship without escort, and on arrival in Lagos was, in spite of credentials, treated as a sort of shuttlecock by every type of official. At last, after many adventures, and helped and hindered by escorts, including an erratic baron and a mad guide, and after travelling three thousand miles, he arrived at Asmara. Even then he was only at the beginning of adventures that carried him into Abyssinia and India and ended with a cable from New York approving that he should go to Singapore. The pages are packed with incidents and anecdotes written in a free-and-easy but telling style which occasionally slips into beauty, as when he describes a scene by an Arab camp fire, and into humour when he tells of the surrender to him of Italian soldiers just as he, armed only with a camera, was contemplating surrender to them. The book is lighthearted enough, but though Mr. RODGER is patient as well as exuberant, he has told enough to make us realize more than ever that we owe a great debt to the men who take pen and camera into places not only dangerous but infested by "jiggers," surrounded by red tape and tiresome to skin and temper, in order that we may have news of the war. The sixty-four plates, reproduced from *Life* magazine, are all most excellent.

B. E. B.



Sillince

"Please have you got any books for the book-drive?"

Camera-Shy

I SUPPOSE you would say I am allergic to photographers. Or you might call me camera-shy. Until the other day I had not set foot in a photographer's studio since I was so high, and even then I did not actually set foot in the place. I was carried in, protesting, and laid in front of the camera like a sacrifice.

To some kinds of photography I have no great objection. I can just bear being taken in a group. But then there is a blessed anonymity about being taken in a group. "I can't see you on here," people will say, after

giving close scrutiny to a group on which I ought to appear. "Unless this is you at the end. It seems to be a bit out of focus."

There you have it. I am out of focus—permanently. So it was a bitter moment when my green identity card was accidentally destroyed recently, along with the snapshot it contained. Since I had no other suitable snaps available there was nothing for it but a premeditated visit to a photographer's.

"I'll make an appointment for you," said a man who has connections in the

business. "How about three weeks next Thursday?"

It sounded terrible. Just like going to the dentist's. "Oh, I hate making appointments," I said. "Couldn't I just pop in sometime and have it out—I mean have it taken—quickly? It's only just a rough likeness I want, nothing elaborate. So long as it's more or less recognizable."

"I'll tell you what," he said, "why not go to one of the three-p.c.s-for-ninepence places? They take you while you're getting your money out and give you the postcards with the

change. Of course," he added, "they don't give you cocaine or gas or anything at that price. You can't expect luxuries for ninepence."

Three for ninepence sounded just the right figure for what I wanted, and the following afternoon saw me on the doorstep of one of these establishments, plucking up courage to go in. Two young women came out as I stood there. They had a selection of postcards in their hands and were weighing up form. "Do you think it's like me?" asked one, plainly in need of reassurance. "Well," said the other, hedging, "the eyes are you, definitely. But there's something different about the bottom half of the face. It's probably the lighting that's wrong. I like the eyes, though," she added, doing her best. I pushed in before I could hear any more. Only too well do I know that tendency of the bottom half of the face to dissociate itself from the top.

The shop was pretty full. At one counter, in front of which was a crowd of people, a girl was dealing out postcards like playing-cards, occasionally giving the pack a quick shuffle just to confuse the customers, who looked bewildered but dogged. The other counter appeared to be the one I wanted. People were getting tickets there and then disappearing down some steps at the back of the shop. I went boldly up to the girl who was handing out the tickets.

"What I want," I said, "is just a small rough photograph of the face only, about two inches deep and two inches across, to fit in my identity card. It must be recent," I added, remembering something it said in the instructions about the identity card.

"Did you say recent or decent?" said the girl, who appeared to be chewing gum. "What you want is a

passport photograph. That'll be one-and-six." She scribbled a number on a small ticket and dropped it on the counter in front of me. "Down the stairs and turn to the right," she said, and I found that I had paid up and followed her instructions before I could get round to asking why a passport photograph should be one-and-six when you could have three postcards for ninepence.

Downstairs I joined a group of people who were waiting in front of a screen at the far end of the room. The camera was evidently on the other side of the screen, and as those who had been "done" came out round the right side fresh aspirants detached themselves from the queue and disappeared round the left side. Everybody spoke in hushed voices, as if they were afraid that a noise might disturb the dicky-bird.

"It doesn't seem to take long," I said to the man in front of me, as a soldier and his girl who had been in the queue a moment before came from behind the screen.

"Fair makes you dizzy the way they whip you in and out," he said. "Takes a bit of getting used to at first. Doesn't give you time to focus yourself, as you might say. I've bin 'ere twice before and I haven't found out where the camera is yet. Hadn't hardly sat me down on the buffet when he says 'Ready day after to-morrow,' and I was outside. I looked like Rip Van Winkle on the morning after when the pictures came out. But I shall be ready for 'em this time. Get everything set before I sit down on the buffet, see? They can't do anything at you till they get you on the buffet. You take my tip, mate: get your smile on before you sit down. Only way to beat 'em to it."

By this time it was my friend's turn

to go round the screen, and he gave me a reassuring nod before he disappeared. Ten seconds later he appeared round the other side with a fixed smile on his face. Evidently he had done it all right this time. I went round the screen.

"Ticket, please," said a young man in his shirt-sleeves, as I stood blinking in a pale-blue diffused light that threw no shadows. "What I want," I said, as I handed him the slip of paper, "is just a small picture of the face, about two inches—"

"Passport photograph," he interrupted, tearing the paper in two and handing half of it back to me. "Sit on the stool, please, and face me. . . ."

I swear I haven't the slightest recollection of what happened after that. I suppose I must have sat down and faced the young man in the shirt-sleeves, but I don't remember doing so. There must have been a camera about the place somewhere, but I didn't see it. I must have summoned up a smile from somewhere, but I don't know where from. There is certainly a fatuous grin on the finished picture.

Of course it is possible that the three prints the girl gave me when I went back two days later are not photographs of me at all. I should like to think so. But the official who gave me my new green identity card accepted the theory that they were likenesses of me without cavil. So I can only suppose there is some resemblance.

Just to make sure I am going back there next week. I think I shall do better next time. And I shall take somebody with me to see if there really is a camera. After all, I can't be as camera-shy as all that. And at three for one-and-six they can't afford to risk a fresh plate on every new customer, can they?

Welfare Hour

"I'M very much obliged to you indeed, sir," declares Corporal Butterfield. He delivers a wind-mill salute which nearly costs him his balance, turns about and marches smartly out. I feel quite disproportionately magnanimous at having granted the pass which will take him home to inspect a very-newly-arrived Butterfield.

"Next!" I shout. There is an abrupt cawing noise from outside, and another seeker of boons stands before me. I hastily consult the notes supplied by an efficient sergeant.

"You're Biddle, aren't you?"

"Sir." Biddle shows no sign of gratification at being known by name. He is tall and wide, with an old-style moustache which looks theatrically false but is probably genuine enough. His greatcoat, though enormous, is too small for him.

"Stand easy, Biddle; this is quite informal."

"Sir."

"You applied to see me about a personal matter. What's the trouble?"

"It's about my fifty-six pound, sir."

"Your fifty-six pounds. I see. What about it?"

The suppliant takes a very deep breath; his greatcoat manages to contain him, though I feel some alarm as the stitches at its shoulder-seams gradually become visible.

"It ain't doing nobody any harm, sir, only lying idle in me kit-bag in me locker in me barrack-room, an' when I seen the sergeant he said he couldn't give permission but he said to see you, sir."

"Permission to do what, Biddle?"

"To keep it in me kit-bag in me locker in me barrack-room where it's outer the way an' not doing nobody any—"

"I'm afraid I must agree with the sergeant, Biddle. Perhaps you are not aware that half the crime in the Service is caused by men putting temptation in the way of others. Leaving watches and cigarette cases and money lying about is simply encouraging theft. I don't know where you got this money from, and that's really no concern of mine in any case. But if you take my advice—"

"Sir."

"Yes, Biddle?"

"What money, sir?"

"Come, come, Biddle; you've applied to see me about this money."

"No, sir."

I study the man's crimson features, and decide that they are not those of a practical joker. I am gentle with him.

"I am sorry. I appear to have misunderstood. Let's start again. What's the trouble?"

"It's about me weight, sir."

"Go on."

He takes another very deep breath. I concentrate hard.

"When I seen the sergeant I told him how I got it from the farmer down Singleton village because when me and my mate saw it he said that on condition we found him a big enough boulder he wouldn't mind us taking it because we was members of Aitch Em Forces. So we slung it on an iron gate-pin—"

"I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, even now. What's become of the fifty-six pounds you were talking about at first?"

"Why, that was the weight of the weight, sir, see? What me and my mate found the farmer down Singleton village a boulder for."

"Ah! Not fifty-six pounds in money at all?"

"No, sir. A fifty-six-pound weight what was being wasted and rusting away 'olding down the tarpauling it was."

"Holding down . . .?"

"The tarpauling over the 'aystack last Sunday week when we was walking down Singleton village me and my mate when suddenly my mate stops and points and says, 'Look, mate,' he says, 'there's a fifty-six-pound weight,' he says—'just rusting itself rotten 'olding down a tarpauling. What about knocking it off?' my mate says."

"A very improper suggestion, Biddle."

"Yes, sir. But anyway the farmer come along just as my mate was trying out a left-hand jerk and press—"

"Trying out a what?"

"Weight-lifting expression, sir. 'Left-hand jerk and press,' 'Two-hands clean and jerk,' 'Right-hand clean and snatch.' They're the ways what weight-lifters lift weights."

"Indeed? I didn't know that."

Biddle leans forward, resting huge hands on my desk.

"Ah!" he says darkly, "there's a lot of deep stuff in weight-lifting. I been weight-lifting since I was so high"—he strikes my desk a powerful blow—"and me father before me, and his father before him, and—"

"Really, that's most interesting. But I think, perhaps—"

"I kep' it up beginning of the war until my weights was blitzed and come down pretty heavy over two hundred pound of 'em out of the attic nearly on to the wife and kids only they happened to be in the Anderson at the time and when the feller come to take the railings for salvage the wife let the weights go along with 'em and

glad to be shot of 'em she said and since then I've been going a bit soft though I've been lucky at some Stations where they've had a setter weights in the gym but there's no weights at this Station and no weight-lifters neither except me and my mate."

"I see. So you want me—"

But Biddle had only paused for breath.

"So when the farmer said we could have the rusty old fifty-six-pounder what was 'olding down the tarpauling over the 'aystack on condition we found a big enough boulder for him me and my mate was on to it like sparrers and we carried it back three mile over ploughed fields slung on an iron gate-pin. But when the sergeant come round inspecting and tried to move me kit-bag out of me locker to see if there was any bits of fluff or fag-ends be'ind it he says, 'Biddle,' he says, 'what the b—'"

"Quite so, Biddle, thank you. I take it, then, that your application is for permission to keep this fifty-six-pound weight amongst your kit, even though such an article is not an item of Service issue: is that it?"

"That's it, sir."

"Good. And if I give you permission have I your word that you will not permit weight-lifting to interfere in any way with your Service duties?"

"Yes, sir. Promise, sir. Me and my mate'll keep fit and well and free from coughs and colds all right now, sir, because weight-lifting not only develops the body and expands the tishoos but keeps the entire cistern in first-rate fighting trim. When my dad was my age he was Crouch End Guild champion for the hundred and eighty pound two-hands clean and jerk, sir, but once he slacked off and begun to go soft he was never the same man again, and one day he come to me and give me his weight-lifting boots and says, 'Ted, boy,' he says, 'I shan't be needing these any more,' he says, 'but I want you to—'"

"All right, Biddle. Permission granted, then."

"I'm very much obliged indeed, sir. It's a weight off me mind, sir."

I study him hard as he salutes and marches out, but am unable to decide with absolute certainty whether his little joke is intentional.

"Next!" I shout, and there is another strangled response from outside as I consult my notes again.

J. B. B.



"Can I persuade you to increase your penny a week from twopence to threepence?"

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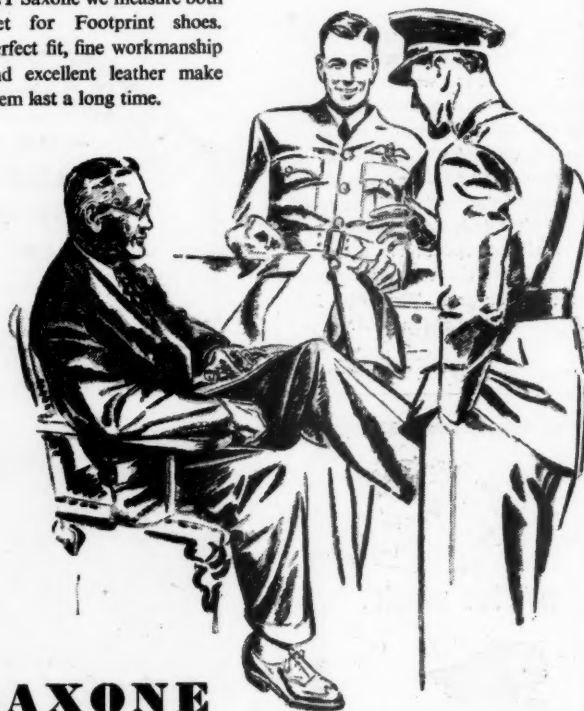
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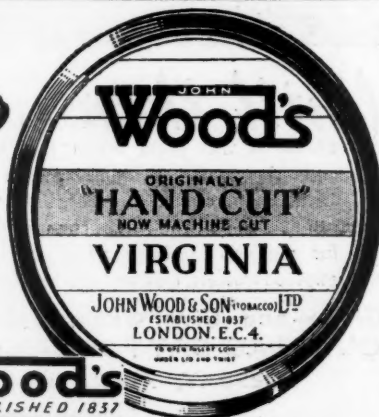
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